

## FOREWORD

What do young fathers in Beverly Hills, East Los Angeles, Oakland, Little Saigon, and the California Youth Authority have in common? It's not a trick question. They have a lot in common. They all face tough challenges as they struggle to fulfill their parental role and few are prepared by formal training for the task. Most of what we know about being parents we learned from the people who raised us. Young fathers in the Youth Authority often are raised in families that lack strong role models. Their fathers are commonly absent for a significant part of their lives. Family violence, substance abuse, weak value and spiritual definition, physical punishment, and poverty frequently characterize their day-to-day lives during the years they are learning to be fathers. With no other knowledge to draw upon, when they become parents themselves they will be the type of fathers their fathers were to them.

Being a father in custody in a correctional institution is both a curse and a blessing. The curse is that the way they live their lives has resulted in being confined for crimes committed against others. They have little contact with their children during the children's formative years. The best they can do is plan for the time they can fulfill their parental role. The blessing is that an opportune teaching moment is created when they plan for their future. It is our aim to make the best of that teaching moment and give young fathers in the Youth Authority a few tools to help them face the challenges of fatherhood.

The Youth Authority is a state youth correctional agency that has 8,500 young men (known as wards) ages 13-25 in custody in 11 institutions and 4 camps. Eighty five percent of the wards are minorities (33% African American, 45% Hispanic, 5% Asian and 2% other). We estimate that more than 20% are fathers. Others are father figures to the children of their girlfriends or to younger children in their extended families. Programming in Youth Authority institutions helps wards become better prepared to confront the issues in their lives, but with a few exceptions parenting education has not been available to them. The Young Men as Fathers Program will be implemented in four Youth Authority institutions to demonstrate that effective parenting education can reduce child maltreatment suffered by the children of the wards. We hope the parenting education will reduce future delinquency among these children. We also hope that the commitment the wards make to their children will help them turn from crime when they return home and take responsibility for their children.

Most of the funding for the Young Men as Fathers Program is provided by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (Grant No. 90-CA-1502).

Recognizing that parenting knowledge and skills need to be reinforced when the wards are released from the institution, the Youth Authority has started parenting programs in four of its parole offices using Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act money.

## **The Search For A Curriculum**

The Youth Authority recognized that no parenting curriculum was likely to exist that would meet the unique needs of fathers in youth correctional institutions, so an extensive process was undertaken to develop one. Information was obtained from five primary sources:

- Existing parenting curricula were reviewed to identify common elements.
- A Project Implementation Committee comprised of experienced Youth Authority staff and parenting education experts identified other elements that needed to be addressed.
- Advisory groups of wards in three Youth Authority institutions were asked what they believe would help them be effective fathers.
- A three day Transfer of Knowledge Workshop with 70 participants, half of them parenting experts and half Youth Authority staff, reviewed the information gathered to-date and prepared a curriculum outline.
- The outline was presented to a Curriculum Development Group of Youth Authority educators and other staff. The Curriculum Development Group listed below wrote the curriculum from the workshop outline, relying heavily on information drawn from the above sources. In particular, **Carolina Luévanos-Garcia** and **Susie Orlowski** spent weeks drafting the curriculum from the Curriculum Development Group's product.

## **Curriculum Development Group**

**Patricia Armstrong**, Community Services Consultant

**Charles Dennis**, Parole Agent, Teacher

**Barry Dowling**, Reading Specialist

**Carolina Luévanos-Garcia**, Treatment Team Supervisor

**Susie Orlowski**, Vocational Instructor

**Heyman Matlock**, Principal

**Geeta Rezvani**, Resource Specialist

**Walt Jones**, Community Services Consultant, Project Manager

Special thanks to **John D.**, Word Processor Extraordinaire, a student at N. A. Chaderjian School, who served tirelessly as word processor for the Curriculum Development Group.

## **A NOTE ABOUT THE CURRICULUM**

The curriculum presented here has several basic components: 1) a two page guide outlining the program, 2) a set of directional statements for each topic area, 3) notes to the instructor as needed for clarification, 4) sample assignments, activities, and handouts, 5) a list of resources, and 6) a bibliography. The curriculum does not present lesson plans as might be found in other curricula because of the nature of educational programming in correctional institutions. For example, the scheduling of classes among the four institutions participating in the Young Men as Fathers Program varies widely. Classes are presented in the evening or during the day; they are from 1 hour up to 3 hours long. Some are taught by credentialed teachers alone and some are team-taught by teachers and treatment staff. Some classes are followed by group and individual sessions on the living unit to reinforce the subject matter. Other classes are held for forestry fire-fighting crews whose classes are interrupted when the students are dispatched to fires and other disasters. This wide variety of programming makes it impractical to prepare lesson plans to fit all situations. Instead, staff at each institution are given wide latitude to present the classes to suit the programming needs of their institution.

The principal goal of this program is to increase parenting knowledge and skills. Our aim is to help the participants obtain open, objective and accurate information in an informal, relaxed setting. The actual class session depends on the style of the instructor. Each group that enters a classroom is unique and the teacher has no way of knowing ahead of time the level of the participants' sophistication in terms of either knowledge or experience. Therefore, care needs to be taken to insure that all participants are invested in the program and will step beyond their perceived limitations through increased effort and dedication.

Cultural sensitivity is the foundation of the Young Men as Fathers Program. This curriculum was developed with careful attention to making it culturally relevant. Participants on the Project Implementation Committee, Ward advisory Groups, Transfer of Knowledge Workshop, and Curriculum Development Group were chosen based on their demonstrated ability and knowledge of culturally sensitive programming. The cultural sensitivity of the curriculum is not enough, however. The classes must be presented with constant awareness of the students' differences. The curriculum's directional statements and awareness goals serve as a teacher's guide to respecting and understanding cultural differences.

### **Without Their Help**

Several people made special contributions to the curriculum. Teachers **Linda Nursement and Donna Gaddy** at the Youth Authority's El Paso de Robles School worked tirelessly to lay the groundwork for the curriculum. Without their work the task could not have been completed. The contributions of 30-40 others cannot be acknowledge by name. They are the Youth Authority wards in three institutions who served on Ward Advisory Groups. They are fathers or father figures and they all expressed a sincere desire to "be there" for their kids. Their advice educated staff about their special needs and gave the curriculum a dimension that no other parenting expert could have provided.

*"To those people with no children but who think they'd  
like to have them some day to fulfill their lives.  
Remember: With fulfillment comes responsibility."  
Bill Cosby  
"Fatherhood"*